

Navy celebrates African American History Month

By Lynette Williams
CNP Public Affairs

February is African American History Month, an opportunity to celebrate the many contributions and accomplishments African-Americans have made not only in the history of our nation, but in the history of the U.S. Navy as well.

Capt. Robert L. Ford, special assistant for minority affairs to the Chief of Naval Personnel, believes that observing African American History Month Navy-wide provides a great opportunity to recognize all individuals whose contributions have upheld the Navy's core values of honor, courage and commitment.

"Our Navy thrives on the contributions of a diverse service, from seaman to admiral, and African American History Month allows us an additional opportunity to celebrate the unique and outstanding accomplishments of our personnel," Ford said.

Ford said there are currently more

than 70,000 African Americans serving the U.S. Navy on active duty, Reserve, or civilian capacity. Historically, the Navy has many reasons to celebrate the accomplishments of its African-American service members.

Vice Adm. Samuel L. Gravely became the Navy's first African American flag officer in 1971. Gravely enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1942 and retired as Vice Adm. in 1980.

Petty Officer (MA) Dorie Miller was decorated with the Navy Cross for his heroism aboard USS West Virginia (BB 48) during WWII. USS Miller (FF 1091), named in honor of Petty Officer Miller, was commissioned in June 1973.

Navy history continues to be made. In August 2000, Rear Adm. Barry C. Black became the first African American to serve as the Navy Chief of Chaplains, the Navy's highest position in the chaplain corps.

Cmdr. Bruce Grooms, with Atlantic Fleet's Nuclear Propulsion Examina-

tion Board, received the 2000 National Society of Black Engineer's Golden Torch Award for Lifetime Achievement in Government. Grooms also received the 1999 Vice Adm. Stockdale Award for outstanding leadership. Lt. Cmdr. Jesse Kingg, operations officer with Strike Fighter Squadron 122 in Lemoore, Calif., won the 2001 Black Engineer of the Year Award for Professional Achievement in Government.

Petty Officer Steven May's, USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67), proudly represented the Navy during the 2000 Summer Olympics in wrestling competition.

And until recently, not many would have recognized the name of Retired Master Chief Petty Officer Carl Brasher until Hollywood made a movie about his life in the Navy. Brasher served in the Navy from 1948 to 1979 and overcame racial discrimination to become the Navy's first African American Master

(See History. 8)

African American History Month

"Creating and defining the African-American community: family, church, politics and culture"

Tuesday, 1500 in the ship's foc'sle

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